From: Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce Public Policy Team
To: Kelli Brown
Subject: The Summit: Policy News for February 9, 2026
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- February 9, 2026 -

Notes from Casey

With the 2026 Primary Election slated for March 3rd and early voting opening this week, it's the perfect time to make sure that you are registered to vote, familiar with your local ballot, and knowledgeable about the candidates. A helpful resource for important dates, voter registration information, candidate list, and — eventually — the results is Buncombe County Election Services, or your county's election services website. The North Carolina State Board of Elections has a page dedicated to helping you find the information that you need, county-by-county.

Hopefully, you've been able to attend one of the many candidate forums happening in and around Asheville. Forums are a great way to hear from candidates, ask questions, and get to know their platforms. Another important resource of information are candidate questionnaires. The Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce recently reached out to Asheville City Council candidates to gauge their positions on issues important to our members like housing, infrastructure, workforce development, and resources and support for businesses. You can **click here to read their responses**.

And if you missed a chance to meet the candidates for Asheville City Council, the Asheville Downtown Association is **hosting a forum tonight** — and there's still time to register. Hope to see you there!

Local Policy Updates

Canton Considers Ban on Crypto Mining Center

The town of Canton is considering a ban on cryptocurrency mining and data centers. Last month, the town board passed a resolution to hold a public hearing on the matter Feb. 11. Multiple companies have already contacted community leaders to see if they could use the former paper mill, which closed in 2023, as a data center site.

Throughout the United States, other data center developments have proven to be controversial. Some in Utah and Alaska have stressed water resources, and others in Baltimore have increased energy bills. Canton Mayor Zeb Smathers commented, “Our job is to try to find ways to say ‘Yes’ and bring businesses in. But we cannot and will not sacrifice our water and natural resources for the almighty dollar.”

Read more

Two New Apartment Complexes Approved, Costco Approval Delayed

Asheville residents will have to wait a bit longer before they learn about the future of a potential Costco in Western N.C. Last week, the Planning and Zoning Commission postponed its hearing on the Enka-Candler site until April 1. Costco representatives requested the date change while they refine the details of the proposed site.

At the same meeting, the commission unanimously approved the plans for two apartment complexes. Developed by Blue Ridge Cascade, Apex on Hazel Mill will be an entirely affordable, 89-unit complex in Emma, and the other new project, being developed by CIP Construction, will be a 180-unit complex along Sardis Road.

Read more

Around the State

NC Assembly Commission Meets to Discuss Nuclear Power Options

For the first time in two years, the North Carolina General Assembly’s Energy Policy Commission met to review recent initiatives and discuss North Carolina’s future with nuclear energy. As AI data centers increase energy demand, the commission is showing renewed interest in nuclear energy. Furthermore, the state continues to explore energy options that do not make use of fossil fuels.

In a statement from Duke Energy, the company noted that they remain “committed to rigorously evaluating new nuclear generation options as we plan for the growing energy demands of our customers.” Two potential sites for new nuclear power plants include Belews Creek, North

Carolina, where Duke Energy currently maintains a coal plant, and Cherokee County, South Carolina, where it still maintains a site with abandoned nuclear reactors.

Read more

National News

President Trump Speaks out on Home Costs Issue

In a Jan. 29 meeting with his Cabinet, President Donald Trump noted that he wants to keep home prices high. He specifically said that he's seeking to protect existing home owners who have watched the values of their homes grow. This goes against the increasingly popular position that one fix to America's affordability issues would be to build more homes, thus driving down values. There are currently bipartisan efforts in both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives to spur more home construction through the use of incentives and zoning policy changes.

Pending construction of single-family homes has fallen during Trump's second term. According to the most recently available data from the U.S. Census Bureau, such permits have plunged by 9.4% over the past 12 months.

Some analysts and commentators have speculated that this is a political move by Trump to appeal to the older demographic in his voting base. In the 2024 presidential election, for example, an estimated 81% of Trump's voters were homeowners.

Read more

When & Where

2026 Election Info.

Candidate List for Asheville/Buncombe ballots

Feb. 12: Early Voting begins (find your polling place)
Feb. 17: Last day to request absentee ballots
Feb. 28: Early Voting ends
March 3: Primary Election Day

International Winter Bike to Work Day on Friday, Feb. 13

The Asheville Chamber is joining Go Mountain Commuting (a program of Land of Sky), Asheville Downtown Association, City of Asheville and Asheville on Bikes supporting International Winter Bike to Work Day takes place Friday, Feb. 13th from 7-9 am. Cyclists are invited to stop by one

of these locations for free coffee, donuts, swag and resources: West Asheville - Sparky's Toys & Gifts, North Asheville - Asheville Chamber or Downtown - Pritchard Park.

Policy on Tap Topic: Housing Supply on Monday, Feb. 23

The Asheville Chamber is hosting another "Policy on Tap" event this month. It will take place on Monday, February 23 from 3:30 - 5 p.m. at the Wicked Weed Funkatorium (147 Coxe Ave). The conversation will be about the challenges and opportunities we face as a community in responding to and meeting the demands for housing supply — and how improving and updating regulations and zoning can improve our chances of filling the gap.

Our panelists for this event will be:

- **Matt Allen**, Director of Professional Development and Government Affairs, Land of the Sky Association of REALTORS
- **Geoffrey Barton**, President & CEO, Mountain Housing Opportunities
- **Megan Alise Carroll**, Executive Officer, Builders Association of the Blue Ridge
- **Stephanie Monson Dahl,** Planning and Urban Design Director, City of Asheville

Please note that **registration is required** due to limited seating.

Read more and register here.

Local Government Meetings

Buncombe County Commissioners
Feb. 17 | 5 p.m.

Asheville City Council
Feb. 10 | Cancelled
Feb. 24 | 5 p.m.

Black Mountain Town Council
Feb. 9 | 6 p.m.

Biltmore Forest Town Commissioners
Feb. 9 | 6 p.m.

Montreat Town Commissioners

Feb. 12 | 5 p.m.

Weaverville Town Council
Feb. 12 | 5 p.m.

Woodfin Town Council
Feb. 17 | 5 p.m.

Henderson County Commissioners
Feb. 2 | 5:30 p.m.
Feb. 18 | 9:30 a.m.

Haywood County Commissioners

Feb. 16 | 5:30 p.m.

Madison County Commissioners
Feb. 10 | 7 p.m.

Transylvania County Commissioners
Feb. 9 | 4 p.m.
Feb. 23 | 6 p.m.

Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce • 36 Montford Avenue • Asheville, NC 28801
http://www.AshevilleChamber.org/

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